

Is help available for paying my telephone bill?
Residential customers with a financial need and who meet eligibility requirements may qualify for assistance programs, including the Link-Up and Lifeline programs.

Link-up is designed to provide a reduction of a telephone company’s connection charges and/or a deferred payment plan for service connection charges.

Lifeline is a program designed to offer a monthly discount on a customer’s local telephone bill.

Please contact your local phone company for more information.

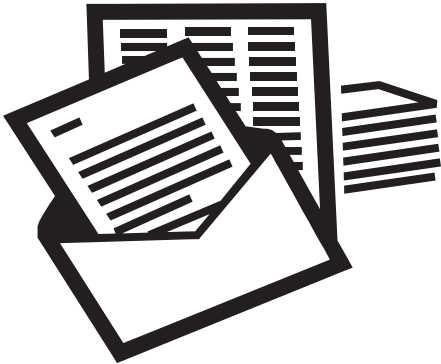


Stay Informed
Important numbers you should know:

- Missouri Telecommunications Industry Association**
573-634-2527
- Public Service Commission**
1-800-392-4211
- Federal Communications Commission**
1-888-225-5322
- Look on your latest phone bill for the phone number of your telecommunications provider.**

This informational brochure has been produced through the efforts of the Missouri Public Service Commission and the Missouri Telecommunications Industry Association

Helping You Understand Your Phone Bill



This brochure is designed to help you understand the charges which appear on your monthly telephone bill. Specific questions or problems with your telephone bill should first be directed to your local telephone company. If questions or concerns continue after that contact, please call the Missouri Public Service Commission’s Consumer Services Department at **1-800-392-4211 -- WE ARE HERE TO HELP**

- Visit these websites:
- Missouri Public Service Commission
www.psc.mo.gov
 - Missouri Telecommunications Industry Association
www.mtia.org
 - Federal Communications Commission
www.fcc.gov



It is important that you stay informed. Missouri telecommunications companies and the Missouri Public Service Commission encourage you to read the bill messages and inserts that come with your bill. They often contain important information regarding charges and services.

How is my telephone bill organized?

- A bill is typically organized into these general categories:
- n **Return page**—Provides your total charges, a return window address, and is to be included when mailing your payment.
 - n **Bill Summary Page**—This gives you the current status of your account, past-due amounts, current charges and the payment due date. This also includes charges for other companies such as a long-distance carrier.
 - n **Detail of Charges**—Breaks down your charges into specific categories such as: local line charge, specific taxes and fees you are paying (such as gross receipts tax, 911 service) and services provided by your local telephone company (such as Caller ID, Call Forwarding).
 - n **Other Charges and Credits**—Accompanies your detail of charges and can include such items as a list of all your long-distance calls during the billing period, company charges, bill messages and other information.

Who can place charges on your telephone bill?



While most of your telephone bill contains charges related to your local telephone service, other companies’ long distance, wireless or Internet service charges may also appear on your local phone bill.

Which charges are for local phone service?

You may be paying your local telephone company for a variety of services including:

- n **Basic local exchange service.** This can include your telephone line(s) in your home or business, touch-tone features and mileage zones. In addition, charges for extended calling plans such as Extended Area Service (EAS) or Metropolitan Calling Area (MCA) as well as other calling features may be bundled with charges for basic local telephone service.
- n **Optional local services.** This can include inside wire maintenance for telephone equipment and fees for optional features such as Caller ID and Call Waiting. Some services are billed on a monthly basis while others are billed on a per usage basis.
- n **Presubscribed Interexchange Carrier Charge (PIC)** is a charge applied when a consumer changes a long distance carrier.
- n **Late payment charges** are applied when a consumer has a past due balance.

- n **Directory advertising charges** may be applied on the local bill when a customer buys a telephone directory advertisement.
- n **Other charges** may include equipment you may have purchased or leased as well as installation charges.

What other charges may appear on your monthly telephone bill?

Relay Missouri Charge

The Relay Missouri Charge was enacted through legislation passed by the Missouri General Assembly. This charge may appear as “other service” on your bill at a current cost of \$0.10 per telephone line. This charge is designed to help assist those with hearing or speech disabilities to communicate over the telephone network through the use of special phones and a communications assistant. This surcharge also provides free equipment to the blind, and to others who have difficulty using the Internet.



Local Number Portability Charge

Created by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), local number portability allows customers the ability to keep their telephone numbers when they switch to another local telephone company.

This fixed, monthly telephone charge allows the local telephone company to recover the costs of making changes to their equipment in order to provide the service. Applied to all telephone bills, the cost recovery period ends after five years.

Federal Subscriber Line Charge

Created by the FCC after the break-up of AT&T in 1984, this monthly charge compensates local telephone companies for a portion of the cost of providing local telephone lines used in interstate (state-to-state) long distance service. Residential customers currently pay a federal subscriber line charge of up to \$6.50 a month for their primary telephone line. The FCC caps the maximum price that a company may charge. This charge may also be called interstate access charge or end user common line charge.

Federal, State and Local Taxes

A federal excise tax (3%) is applied to local telephone services, as well as a state of Missouri sales tax (4.225%). Local and county taxes may be applied according to city/county government orders. Fees may also be applied by the city or county for various reasons. Rates and effective dates vary according to local ordinances. These fees are collected by the local telephone company for the governing body. Money generated by these taxes is used to support general government operations and specific public services.

Gross Receipts Tax

Missouri legislation passed in the late 1970s established this tax. According to state law, cities or counties may, by ordinance, impose a sales tax upon goods and services. Neither the company nor the Missouri Public Service Commission originated the gross receipts tax. The Commission has authorized utility companies to add, as a separate item on the utility bill of the customer, a charge equal to the proportionate part of any tax or fee imposed upon the company by local taxing authorities. Questions regarding the gross receipts tax should be directed to the local taxing authority.

911 Surcharge

This is a charge imposed by local governments to help pay for emergency services such as fire and rescue. The Missouri Public Service Commission does not regulate 911 surcharges in Missouri. Your local government determines whether to provide a 911 system. Costs associated with the 911 systems are collected by the phone company through your monthly telephone bill and then paid to the provider of that service.

Universal Service Fund (USF)

Created by the FCC, this fee on your monthly telephone bill helps to make phone service affordable and available to all Americans, including consumers with low incomes, those living in areas where the costs of providing telephone service is high, schools and libraries and rural health care providers. Congress mandated that all telephone companies providing interstate service contribute to the Universal Service Fund. Although not required to do so by the government, many carriers choose to pass their contribution costs on to their customers monthly telephone bills.

What if I want to dispute a charge on my bill?



You should contact the respective provider as soon as possible. The phone number of the company’s business office is listed on the phone bill. Incorrect charges can be adjusted if appropriate. If you are not satisfied with the results of your inquiry, please contact the Missouri Public Service Commission at 1-800-392-4211.

What if I don’t pay my bill on time?

Failure to pay the bills within the time frame specified can result in late payment charges and possible deposits to secure the account. Customers with past due balances who fail to make an effort to pay may be disconnected. Customers may then be subject to paying the full amount, late charges and a reconnection fee to have service restored. If you have a long distance bill in dispute, your local telephone service cannot be disconnected if you are current on your local charges.

How is the due date determined?

The Missouri Public Service Commission requires residential customers have a due date that is at least 21 calendar days after the bill mailing date. Business customers have a due date 10 calendar days after the bill mailing date.

What is slamming and cramming?

Your bill will indicate your long-distance company has changed. If you believe your long-distance provider was switched without your authorization (a practice called slamming), you should contact your telephone company’s business office immediately. If you have a complaint to register regarding slamming, please contact the FCC at 1-888-CALLFCC (1-888-225-5322).

Cramming is the practice of adding charges to your phone bill for services that you did not order. The charges are often unrelated to actual phone usage. Customers are warned to avoid contests and sweepstakes entries that require a signature and always read the fine print on promotional materials before signing anything. Cramming complaints should be directed to the company responsible for placing those charges on your bill.